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ABSTRACT

To what extent do local educational agencies administer federally provided funds for educational research, demonstration, development, and evaluation? Based on data from 4,400 grant and contract projects funded by 34 federal agencies, the local educational agencies administer more than 30 percent of the funds for educational research, development, demonstration, and evaluation. Results also indicate that approximately $140 million are expended in this effort primarily in elementary education and special education, but also including some other areas such as early childhood education and alternative approaches to education. (Author)

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FEDERALLY FUNDED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH BY THE LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY: HOW MUCH AND FOR WHAT?

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Federally Funded Educational Research by the Local Education Agency: How Much and for What?

Overview

An issue which frequently arises in discussions of educational research is the amount of research done in schools. A further refinement is that since it is being done how much of it are the local education agencies (LEA's) doing and what kind of research activities are being carried out.

In order to get some sort of estimate of the amount, proportion, and nature of educational research done by local education agencies, the resources of the Interagency Research Information System (IRIS) were used. This system serves two federal interagency panels, the Interagency Panel for Early Childhood Research and Development and the Interagency Panel for Research and Development on Adolescence, charged with a coordination function for those federal agencies sponsoring research on children and youth. IRIS is maintained by the Social Research Group, the George Washington University, and has project level data from some 35 different agencies, offices, bureaus, etc., from six different departments or department level agencies. (See Appendix 1 for agencies). Using a broad definition of educational research that includes basic and applied research, demonstration, development, and evaluation, 3,195 projects were identified as federally supported educational research. When "LEA/non-LEA" was used as a partitioning variable it was found that the LEA category accounted for 38.2% of the funds and 32.6% of the total number of the projects in FY '76, mostly in the area of demonstration type projects.

Definitions

Research is defined in the broadest sense to include both knowledge production and knowledge utilization. Educational research for the purposes of this study includes those projects which meet the criteria proposed by Nelson and Mason.[1] Projects which;

- Provide instruction to children or adolescents or research about such instruction,
- Use an educational curriculum for children or adolescents or research about such a curriculum,
- Use or investigate innovative teaching procedures or approaches to instruction.
- Use or develop innovative instructional material for children or adolescents,

The types of research activities that this broad definition includes are further defined in Table 1.

Table 1. Educational Research Category Definitions[2]

Basic - refers to research directed primarily toward the increase of knowledge, improvement of understanding, providing background information, and discovery of basic relationships; not necessarily applicable to solutions of immediate problems; may include theory building.

Applied - refers to research in which results are intended to be more directly applicable to immediate problems than basic research; applied research may be derived from basic research or theory or may be empirical; aimed at showing how existing knowledge can be used in new and useful ways.

Evaluation research - refers to research designed to determine the overall effectiveness of a broad program, projects, models. strategies, materials, methods and costs.

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[1]Nelson, Carnot E, and Ward S, Mason, 1975 Federal Funding for Education Knowledge Production and Utilization; Project Content and Performer by Agency, R&D Systems Studies, Technical Report #3, The National Institute of Education, DHEW. Washington, D.C,, 1977.

[2]Classification of Federally-Funded Research in Early Childhood and Adolescence, Social Research Group, The George Washington University, Washington, D.C. 1977.

Policy research - refers to studies of needs, goals, priorities, and guidelines and often includes state-of-the-arts papers and library research.

Demonstration - refers to projects which demonstrate the use of a model or method as a means of disseminating a previously developed and tested model. These projects do include an evaluation component.

Research support and utilization activities - refers to projects funded with research dollars that do not conduct basic or applied research, but support the planning or implementation or dissemination of research related to children and adolescents, such as conferences, publications, installation of proven models.

Another dimension which was used to gain a clearer picture of the educational research effort in LEA's was that of primary substantive focus. Seven major categories made up this dimension, three of which were further subdivided. The major and minor categories, with definitions, are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Substantive Major and Minor Categories

Primary Substantive Focus - The primary focus of a project dictates the substantive area classification. When the project data was collected, the field research assistant was instructed to indicate the primary focus of the project being coded. The primary foci are mutually exclusive so a project may be so classified only once.

Child/Adolescent Development - The overall category of child/adolescent development includes three sub-categories: (a) physical development, (b) cognitive development, (c) socioemotional development. These sub-categories define the overall category with the following indented definitions:

(a) Physical Development - studies of growth, normal and abnormal, as well as studies of disease of children and youth and physical health issues or areas.

(b) Cognitive Development - studies examining the processes by which knowledge is acquired.

(c) Socioemotional Development - studies of the socialization processes through which the child acquires an awareness of himself as an individual, of his role and the role of others in interaction, of the cultural values of the society in which he lives, as well as studies of the behaviors that result from the acquisition of his knowledge.

Family - Studies of the family as they relate to children. A family is defined as a relatively permanent ongoing primary relationship which involves at least one adult and a child.

Broader Social Environment - Studies of the relationships and interactions between children and the society in which they live.

Health and Welfare Services - Research whose purpose is preventive or remedial which is designed to improve the physical and/or mental well being of children and youth or which, in addition to education and health care, is needed to insure the opportunity for optimal development.

Day Care - which includes projects caring for children in the parents' absence (not necessarily involving educational services).

Health Care - used to describe any project--preventive or remedial--which is designed to improve the physical or mental well being of children and youth.

Protective/Advocacy - used to describe projects dealing with emergency care, protection, adoption, foster care and all services for abused children.

Educational Services - This category includes all instruction provided through the auspices of intervention programs serving children--inside or outside the classroom. Sub-categories are:

Special Education - the instruction of any type of handicapped child regardless of setting. This sub-category may also include gifted children.

Early Childhood Education - combines those projects featuring stimulation designed to promote the cognitive development of the child and other instructional projects for children prior to their entry into kindergarten.

Elementary School Education - educational programs for children in kindergarten (five years old) through sixth grade (eleven years old).

Secondary School Education - educational programs for children in the seventh grade (twelve years old) through adolescents in the twelfth grade (seventeen years old).

Post-secondary Education - combines education for high school graduates, either college, professional or advanced vocational training with remedial programs in basic subjects for adults and, by definition, includes out-of-school adolescents.

Alternative Education - instructional programs that are innovative ways of delivering education to children and youth.

Parent Education - education or training for people who are actually parents or are expectant parents.

Juvenile Justice Institutions or Services - Studies of delinquency treatment or prevention services which are designed to rehabilitate children and youth who have been declared in violation of the law.

Data Base

IRIS contains data on more than 4,400 FY '76 projects funded by the federal government and devoted to research on children and youth. More than half a billion dollars are spent on these projects. Educational research, as defined in this paper, accounts for 3,195 projects and just under 365 million dollars. The system is updated after the end of each fiscal year by trained field research assistants abstracting information from funded proposals. Information reflecting the nature of the research in terms of objectives, methodology, sample description, and instrumentation are collected and coded. Retrieval of the computerized data can be on any one, or a combination of 900+ descriptors.

Inclusion in the data base is limited to projects funded by member

agencies of the two federal interagency panels (See Appendix 1 for membership rosters). While some agencies known to have an interest in educational research are not panel members and thus are not represented in the data base, both the National Institute of Education and the Office of Education are fully represented by the divisions dealing with children and youth. Nelson et al.[2] estimated that for FY '75 the IRIS data base included 58% of the federally sponsored educational research or knowledge production and utilization efforts in the country for people of all ages. This percentage figure is low with regard to local education agencies in that a number of agencies which were included in the work of Nelson et al. do not have as an agency mandate the support of educational research in which LEA might be expected to contribute, for example, the Department of State and the Administration on Aging. Other agencies quite probably do fund LEA's such as the Appalachian Regional Commission, but are beyond the scope of the data collection mandate and constitute a shortcoming in this study.

Procedure

The data were tabulated, using as the criterion for inclusion the definition of educational research given earlier, into two major types of tables. The first type allows the reader to compare numbers of projects and funding levels for LEA's vs. non-LEA's by type of research activity. The second set of tables, using the same LEA/non-LEA dichotomy, present the number of projects and level of funding by substantive areas.

Results

What kinds and how much R&D do LEA's carry out? When the total

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[2]Nelson, Carnot E., William M. Sowers, and Ward S. Mason. 1975 Federal Funding for Education Knowledge Production and Utilization: A Composite Estimate, by Agency, Using Four Data Bases. R&D Systems Studies, Technical Report #1, The National Institute of Education, DHEW. Washington, D.C., 1977.

educational R&D effort at the federal level is broken out into types of activities, the "forte" of the LEA is the demonstration and utilization project. The LEA's dominated this type of research when compared with others, performing 62.1% of the projects and accounting for 65.4% of the funding. This result is further supported when this particular category is compared with the other categories in which LEA's are active. All told, 91% of LEA R&D projects fall within this category and account for 96.8% of the funding.

Given the preponderance of LEA R&D in demonstration and utilization the magnitude of the percentage of total LEA figures for projects and funding necessarily drops in the other categories -- to virtually nil in the basic category, to 6.6% for projects and 2.5% in funding for applied, for both evaluation and policy to only a trace, and for support and utilization to 1.9% of the projects and .6% of the total LEA funding. Table I presents the data on funding and projects upon which these percentages were based.

Table I. Total and LEA Educational R&D Supported by Federal Funds

	Total		LEA	
Type of Research	$	Count	$	Count
Basic	20,198,448	520	37,803	2
Applied	80,457,008	691	3,465,103	69
Evaluation	23,738,918	152	75,782	1
Policy	7,773,283	109	90,000	2
Demonstration	206,170,849	1,526	134,879,215	947
Sup. & Util.	26,234,879	197	771,771	20
Total	364,573,385	3,195	139,319,674	1,041

The difference between the amount of money spent on educational research and the amount received by LEA's for educational R&D is an interesting question. Since it is beyond the scope of this paper, it has not been specifically pursued; but data on a related question of what percentages of educational research are carried on in the school setting and what percentages do LEA's do, is presented in Table II.

Table II. Percentage of Educational Research and Development Done in the School Setting and Done by LEA's

	LEA's		School Setting	
Type of Research	$ %	Count %	$ %	Count %
Basic	.2	.4	8.4	10.4
Applied	4.3	10.0	54.9	58.9
Evaluation	.3	.7	85.8	67.8
Policy	1.2	1.8	86.6	79.8
Demonstr.	65.4	62.1	80.5	74.3
Sup. & Util.	2.9	10.2	22.0	50.8
Total	38.2	32.6	67.1	60.0

Although the LEA percentages cannot be directly compared with the percentage figures reflecting the school setting R&D, it is clearly evident that in most R&D areas LEA's are not the primary performer. Demonstration projects, on the other hand, are very much the province of the LEA.

Substantive Areas

In looking at the substantive nature of the total educational R&D, as one would expect, educational services account for the major portion of resources. Table III compares total funding in all areas with that done by LEA's.

Table III. Total Educational Research Funding Levels and Projects by Substantive Area, FY '76

Substantive Area	Total Effort $	Total Effort Count	LEA's $	LEA's Count
Human Development	20,805,693	414	110,000	1
Physical	3,053,450	40	—	—
Cognitive	11,555,480	217	—	—
Socioemotional	5,732,944	142	110,000	1
The Family	2,253,281	40	--	--
Broad Social Env.	2,709,629	57	31,865	1
Research Methods	1,458,889	18	--	--
Health/Welfare Serv.	22,278,948	192	1,190,796	8
Day Care	1,120,607	15	—	—
Health Care	10,128,575	104	240,796	5
Protective/Advoc.	6,879,297	40	—	—
Educational Serv.	314,427,803	2,460	137,987,015	1,031
Spec. Educ.	55,336,815	423	5,948,079	110
Early Child. Educ.	4,127,529	88	948,471	40
Elementary Educ.	91,239,840	542	71,184,464	430
Secondary Educ.	16,393,835	181	9,853,423	88
Post Sec. Educ.	6,802,474	97	75,782	1
Alternative Educ.	3,275,293	42	2,533,423	22
Parent Educ.	1,437,417	7	—	—
Juvenile Justice	639,142	12	—	--
Total	$364,573,385	3,195	$139,319,674	1,042

In terms of educational research the area of human development is usually done by organizations other than the LEA, only one of the 414 projects in this area has an LEA as the recipient of the funds. The same general comment holds true for all the other substantive areas with the exception of educational services. In research on educational services LEA's account for 43.9% of the funds and 41.9% of the projects.

Obviously LEA's function in the school setting. Comparing the percentage of LEA-executed research by area with that which takes place in the school setting provides a better view of the potential range of LEA R&D activities and the extent to which LEA's participate. Table IV on the next page presents this data in percentages.

Keeping in mind the actual total dollar amounts and project numbers for each of the substantive areas given in Table III, by far the largest substantive area is educational services. Approximately 75% of the educational research takes place in this area and the LEA's do a bit over 40% of it. Their major research contributions are in elementary and secondary education and in alternative education. The dollar amount of research on elementary education is the largest, at 91+ million, of any of the subordinate areas of educational services.

Research on special education accounts for 55+ million, but only about half of this is done in the school setting and only 10.8% by LEA's.

Research on secondary education is a distant third place in level of funding overall, with approximately 26 million dollars committed in FY '76. More than 80% of these funds were spent in the school setting, and 60% for projects carried out by LEA's.

Table IV. Percentages of LEA-Conducted Educational R&D Compared to School Setting R&D by Substantive Areas

Substantive Area	% LEA		% School Setting	
	%	Count	$	Count
Human Development	.5	.2	3.5	4.6
Physical	-	-	-	-
Cognitive	-	-	2.4	2.8
Socioemotional	1.9	.7	7.0	6.3
The Family	-	-	27.6	10.0
Broad Soc. Environ.	1.2	1.7	10.7	23.7
Research Methods	-	-	-	-
Health/Welfare Service	5.3	4.2	14.8	17.2
Day Care	-	-	-	-
Health Care	2.4	4.8	15.8	24.0
Protective/Advoc. Serv.	-	-	-	-
Educational Services	43.9	41.9	76.1	73.5
Spec. Educ.	10.8	26.0	48.7	54.1
Early Childhood Educ.	23.0	45.5	44.6	43.2
Elementary Educ.	78.0	79.3	99.7	98.2
Secondary Educ.	60.1	48.6	83.5	82.3
Post Secondary Educ.	1.1	1.0	52.2	66.0
Alternative Educ.	77.4	52.4	24.0	19.1
Parent Educ.	-	-	-	-
Juvnile Justice	-	-	-	8.3

Summary and Conclusions

None of the results are particularly startling. It would seem that LEA's tend to get Federal funds to carry out research, as defined in this paper, in the areas they are traditionally seen to function. They conduct the majority of the Federally funded demonstration projects which are probably evaluated by non-LEA organizations. They do almost no basic research. They do some applied research but compared to the amount done in the school setting they do only a small percentage. In evaluation research, although 86%+ is done in the school setting, LEA's conduct under 1% of it. In the other areas the pattern is the same.

From a substantive standpoint LEA's attend to educational services to the virtual exclusion of the other areas examined. Within educational services, Federal support for LEA research is concentrated on elementary education and secondary education. There is a certain degree of reaching outside the traditional role as evidenced by their efforts in conducting research in alternative education and early childhood education although the latter could well be kindergarten level activities.

Overall this pattern of activity would seem to reflect the ascribed role of the LEA. Those research activities(e.g. basic and applied research) which are not traditionally associated with the LEA's are not done by them. However these same activities do take place in the school setting, carried out by non-LEA organizations such as universities, non-profit or profit-making firms.

The LEA emphasis on demonstration has a legislative mandate underlying a major part of it. Federal organizations charged with promulgating model programs and demonstrations contribute the majority of these funds such as the Division of Bilingual Education, the Bureau of Educationally Handicapped

and the Follow Through Program, all in the Office of Education.

From most perspectives, the data seem to indicate that LEA's tend to do the business of LEA's, attempting to improve the education of children and youth through the development and demonstration of new and innovative curriculum and programs. They rarely go beyond the scope of educational services R&D, but in part that is the result of the nature of the LEA, as a generic type. The largest discrepancy between the amount spent in the school setting and the funds administered by LEA's is in evaluation, but here the scope of interest of the LEA interacts with the nature of evaluation. Evaluation projects may well go across several LEA's, effectively barring one of individual LEA from administering projects of that nature. The "disinterested evaluator" role associated with evaluation projects tends to be a disqualifier for LEA's in having their own evaluation projects dealing with, but fiscally independent of, their demonstration projects. There is little internal interest in serving as an evaluator for programs outside the individual LEA. Thus the area goes by default to non-LEA organizations.

Participating Member Agencies of the Interagency Panel on Early Childhood Research and Development

Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Department of Commerce, Center for Census Use Studies
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW)
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)
- Office of Human Development (OHD)
- Office of Child Development (OCD)
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
- National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke (NINCDS)
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
- Bureau of Community Health Services (BCHS)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
- Social and Rehabilitation Service(SRS)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
- Office of Education (OE)
- National Institute of Education (NIE)

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA)
Department of Labor (DOL)
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

The following agencies are also members of the Interagency Panel on Adolescence:

- Office of Youth Development (OYD/DHEW)
- Office of Civil Rights (OCR/DHEW)
- ACTION

It should be noted that organizational changes since the data collection period have changed a number of the agency names and superordinate agencies. For example OCD and OYD are now a part of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families.